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Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)
)
Amendment of Sections 74.1231,) RM-9419
74.1232, 74.1233, 74.1284 of the)
Commission's Rules)

To: The Commission

COMMENTS OF RIVER CITY RADIO, INC.

River City Radio, Inc. ("RCR") hereby submits its comments in the above-captioned proceeding, which relates to the August 13, 1997 Petition for Rule Making (the "Petition") by the American Community AM Broadcasters Association ("ACAMBA"). The Petition proposes to allow AM station licensees to utilize FM translator stations. As explained below, RCR generally supports ACAMBA's proposal, but believes that eligibility to use FM translators should not be limited solely to AM stations broadcasting with no more than 2,500 watts during the day and 500 watts at night.

RCR is the licensee of AM station KCJK, 1560 kHz, Iowa City, Iowa, a Class B station authorized to operate directionally with daytime and nighttime power of 1000 watts. For years, the reach of RCR's 1560 kHz signal was severely limited by its relatively low power, coupled with interference to reception from other stations on the crowded AM band. Particularly at night, RCR's 1560 kHz signal was often difficult to receive even in areas of Iowa City, the station's community of license. Within the last

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year, RCR has begun program tests under a construction permit it was granted to operate on 1630 kHz in the AM expanded band. That facility (call letters KCJJ) operates nondirectionally with 10,000 watts daytime and 1000 watts nighttime. With its higher daytime power, and particularly its location in the as-yet uncrowded AM expanded band (relatively few stations authorized to broadcast in the expanded band have commenced operation), the expanded band station has enabled RCR to reach many more listeners with a receivable signal.

Nonetheless, the license of KCJK and its associated expanded band construction permit are the only broadcast authorizations that RCR holds. RCR is very much a standalone AM station operator attempting to compete in a radio market dominated by large media companies owning multiple AM and FM stations in the market. RCR's authority to operate an expanded band station has helped its signal problems, but it is not going to change RCR's place as an independent AM broadcaster amid powerfully consolidated competitors. In this regard, it is worth noting that even though it is permitted to operate its standard AM band facility and its AM expanded band facility simultaneously for a period of up to five years after the expanded band station is licensed, RCR simply lacks the financial resources to do so. Instead, RCR has (with FCC approval) taken its 1560 kHz station off the air so it can operate its expanded band facility.

Against this backdrop, RCR supports ACAMBA's idea of allowing AM standalone stations to utilize FM translators. As ACAMBA correctly points out, FM translator stations will enable AM stations to compensate for their often highly deficient

signal coverages, particularly at night. This will help AM stations to compete with FM stations, which are not hampered with comparable signal problems. As a standalone AM station operator straining to survive in the consolidating radio industry, RCR believes that allowing AM stations to utilize FM translators would serve the public interest. It would provide a sorely-needed opportunity for standalone AM stations to at least improve somewhat their ability to compete against FM stations and the large group owners that operate many of them.

While it supports the ACAMBA proposal in general, RCR sees no valid reason for the Petition's suggestion to limit eligibility to utilize FM translators only to AM stations "with a licensed daytime power not exceeding 2,500 watts and a licensed nighttime power not exceeding 500 watts." See Petition at 4. Such a limitation, RCR believes, would arbitrarily exclude from FM translator eligibility large numbers of standalone AM stations with daytime powers of over 2,500 watts and nighttime powers of 1000 watts and higher – many of which face competitive and signal coverage problems to the same degree as do their lower-powered counterparts. As noted above, RCR's licensed 1560 kHz facility suffered from severe signal coverage and receivability problems at night even though it was authorized for 1000 watts daytime and nighttime. The same could well be true of RCR's signal on the AM expanded band once more authorizations on the band are put into operation. Simply stated, small AM stations face the same types of signal problems, and those problems are not meaningfully different whether the station is authorized for less or more than 2,500 watts during the day or 250, 500, or 1000 watts at night. To allow use of FM translators only by stations with no more

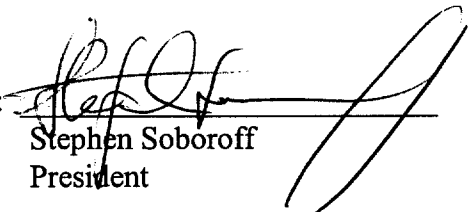
than 2,500 watts of power during the day and 500 watts at night is not a rational distinction.

In short, RCR supports an amendment to the Commission's rules which would allow standalone AM stations to utilize FM translators to compensate for deficiencies in signal coverage. It agrees with ACAMBA's general statements as to the need for such a rule change to help standalone AM licensees compete in a rapidly consolidating radio industry. In RCR's view, however, it makes no sense to limit the use of FM translators to only the lowest-powered AM stations (those with daytime power of 2,500 watts or less and nighttime power of 500 watts or less). Instead, all standalone AM stations – at a minimum, those with authorized nighttime power of 1000 watts – should be eligible for the use of FM translators.

Respectfully submitted,

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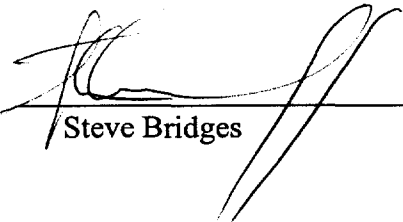
By: 
Stephen Soboroff
President

Dated: February 9, 1999

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Stephen Soboroff, hereby certify that copies of the foregoing "Comments of River City Radio, Inc." were sent this 9th day of February, 1999, by first class United States mail, postage prepaid, to the following:

Mr. Bryan Smeathers
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Steve Bridges